

February, 2026

“...physical exercises are good for tuning up muscles, improving circulation and breathing, and in general for the overall good health of the body. So, too, what we call spiritual exercises are good for increasing openness to the movement of the Holy Spirit...”

(Ignatius of Loyola, First Annotation, Fleming, Trans.)

Spiritual exercise is good for the spirit just as physical exercise is good for the body. And as having a routine is helpful for physical exercise, so too is a routine helpful for the person who wishes to exercise the spirit through regular communication with God. Perhaps you already have a prayer routine. However, if not, or if you simply wish to change up your routine a bit, Ignatius of Loyola offers several suggestions in his manual entitled *The Spiritual Exercises*. First, find a time and a place where you can regularly go to pray without being disturbed. For some, the morning hours are perfect; for others it might be mid-afternoon or evening. Most importantly, it needs to be a time that works for you; and choosing a specific place that is quiet and comfortable for this prayer will help to develop it as a habit —as your own personal time with God.

Once you have chosen a specific place and time, begin your prayer by consciously remembering that you are in the presence of God. Then, choose a particular scripture passage on which to focus. To begin, you might choose *John* 4: 1-14 (Whoever comes to Jesus Christ never thirsts); or *Isaiah* 43: 1-7 (You are precious in my eyes and I love you). Whatever passage you choose, read it over slowly, perhaps even aloud. Note any phrase or word that stands out to you. Then, set the passage aside and simply mull over that word or phrase: Who said it? To whom was it addressed? What does it mean for you and for your life and world? Let the word or phrase take your mind and your heart where it will. When you are finished, tell God what you were thinking and feeling. What would you like to give over to God? And what do you want of God in this moment? Finally, when you are finished, offer a prayer of thanks to God for this time spent together.

Of course, prayer happens in many forms and as Christians we hope to communicate with God in every aspect of our daily lives. Even so, a routine of prayer such as this can help to center us in Christ each day. And this prayer time does not need to be onerous. Like physical exercise, the amount of time spent in this kind of prayer will increase over time. Begin small; and after reading the passage, set a timer for mulling it over if that is helpful. Five minutes may gradually become ten minutes and then fifteen and more. Give your spiritual exercise routine time to build up just as you would give your body time to grow in physical exercise. Most importantly, remember that God desires to spend time with you personally and will be delighted each time you open yourself in prayer.

Lord, teach us to pray...

Elizabeth Goodine, Spiritual Director